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Execution Of Hostage Threatened

Beirut Caller Targets 1 of 4 Americans

By Nora Boustany
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BEIRUT, Feb. 16—An anonymous caller speaking in the name of the shadowy Islamic Jihad terrorist group said today in a call to a news agency that the group had sentenced one of four remaining American hostages to death.

The Arabic-speaking caller told The Associated Press that he would not identify the hostage to be executed, but added, "When he is executed you will all know about it."

The caller added that American journalist Jeremy Levin, who appeared early Thursday morning at a Syrian Army post in central Lebanon, had been freed and had not escaped.

Meanwhile, former world boxing champion Muhammad Ali, an American black Muslim, arrived here to seek the release of the four Americans kidnaped in west Beirut last year and appealed to their captors to show mercy as instructed in the holy book of Islam, the Koran.

Levin, the bureau chief in Lebanon of Cable News Network, was abducted by gunmen in west Beirut on March 7 last year. He was taken to a U.S. base in West Germany, where a doctor said today he is in good health and can return to the United States whenever he wishes. CNN announced that he is scheduled to arrive at Andrews Air Force Base at noon Monday.

Anonymous callers have told various western news agencies in Beirut that they still hold William Buckley, a U.S. Embassy political officer; the Rev. Benjamin Weir, a Presbyterian minister; Peter Kilburn, a librarian at the American University of Beirut, and the Rev. Lawrence Jenco, a Roman Catholic priest.

In an interview, Ali said: "We feel these are very critical moments, and we don't want to say anything that jeopardizes the safety or chances of the hostages being released . . . Before those holding the hostages captive make any other step in executing what is justice in their mind, let mercy and compassion override their justice," he added. Ali's manager, Jaber Muham-

mad, noted that every chapter of the Koran begins with the phrase, "In the name of God the merciful, the compassionate."

Ali, speaking haltingly apparently because he suffers from Parkinson's syndrome, said he appealed to the kidnapers to meet with him. His manager stressed that "Muhammad Ali is requesting that he would like to meet them before they take another step and his motive is not political. He prays to Allah that they grant him his wish."

Ali, who originally had planned to go to Iran to seek the hostages' release, said he had thought Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini could use his influence as an Islamic spiritual leader, but Levin's escape showed the captives were in Lebanon.

Islamic Jihad is believed to have links with the Iranian government.

"The hostages are not in Iran, so why go there?" Ali asked.

The anonymous caller today told The Associated Press he spoke on behalf of the Islamic Jihad-Beirut Command, and insisted that Levin had not escaped, but that he had been released.

"First, after the intervention and the insistence of a noted American Islamic personality for the release of the American detainees we are holding, and after we made certain that Levin was not involved in anything concerning our order, and after trying him in absentia, the Islamic court, which adheres to the koranic law, decided . . . that the organization would not hurt American journalist Levin," today's caller said.

The personality he referred to appeared to be Ali.